

MEMO

TO: Michigan House Workforce, Trades and Talent Committee Members
FROM: David Quinton Worthams, Director of Human Resource Policy 
DATE: March 11, 2021
Re: Importance of Career and Technical Education (CTE)

For many years now, the issue of closing the *talent gap* between the needs of Michigan manufacturers and skilled Michiganders to fill those jobs has been one of our highest priorities to address. It is vital to the future of Michigan's economy because manufacturing drives our economy. We make up the largest sector of the economy, producing about 19% of Michigan's gross state product, providing jobs that pay an average of \$79,000 per employee. We export 95% of the total good produced in the state worth over \$55 billion. Any drag on manufacturing is a drag on the entire state.

Our 1,700 members are a part of the community of 11,000 manufacturers in the state. We all compete globally – not just for materials or products but for people. The MMA team often reminds policy makers of the fact that the state that wins the talent development battle is the state that wins the economic war. The inability to create and provide talent undermines our ability to attract and maintain investment in Michigan. By missing opportunities to win investments means other places around the world will fill those jobs with people who could live, work, and play in the Great Lakes state.

Manufacturers need people with the right skills, right now. We need people who know how to make things. Skilled workers are needed as we discover new technologies, as we expand into new products, as we explore new inventions that make life better. That is why we are so excited that the House created your committee and is giving you the opportunity to craft policies that will keep our state at the forefront of the future.

Over the last few weeks, our team has been discussing our ideas on how to close the talent gap with you and your House colleagues. Among our ideas is continued support for the Going PRO Talent fund, for Michigan Reconnect, and Future for Frontliners. These programs will help those no longer in school and in the workforce to access programs that will give them the skillsets in demand.

Additionally, we suggest policies that dramatically transform our education system so that there are multiple pathways to Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes, to career exploration, and work-based learning for K-12 students. Part of that is to use the flexibility provided by the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) that allows high school students a chance to use their arts/foreign language/health/physical education credit to student in a CTE course. We are grateful for the enactment of PA 158 of 2020 which removed the sunset on that flexibility and we ask that flexibility be maintained in statute.

The next step is to take further actions that will change the perception of what a career in manufacturing is. Identifying students and potential employers through continued use of skill assessments, bringing career fairs and other opportunities to share the success of the trades, and showing the quality of life that can be supported by the trades will broaden the number of options students have knowledge of as they march towards graduation.

Creating an environment in which public/private partnerships can be built to increase access, not just to CTE courses, but to build an entire CTE curriculum that meets the needs of manufacturers and employers in the local community, is also part of the solution. MMA has worked closely with the Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME) Education Foundation to craft PRIME schools in Michigan. This is just one example of a program that can be implemented in the state. We believe legislative support, through incentives in an appropriation bill and through public policy support from this committee will empower local school district and local manufacturers to come together and show students a full menu of careers that lay ahead of them.

Once again, we are grateful for the time to share our experience in the creation of PRIME schools and to work with all of you to keep Michigan the best place for all manufacturers to call home. If we can be of any assistance as you draft legislation, please reach out to anyone on the MMA team.